

MIDDLE EAST

Israel's latest massacres and the cry of the patriarchs: 'We will remain in Gaza'.

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**Nicola
Scopelliti**



It is the usual, tried-and-tested cliché, but no one is falling for it anymore. Whenever the Israeli army carries out a massacre, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu first apologises, pointing out that it was human error or a mistake in planning the launch by a soldier.

Then, through the army spokesman, he announces a 'thorough investigation' to verify what really happened. This scenario has played out several times in recent months. For example, after an IDF sniper killed two women, a mother and daughter, inside the Catholic parish of the Holy Family in Gaza, and artillery struck the Latin church in the Strip.

The same happened on Monday morning, 25 August, when a tank fired a shot that killed a television operator filming Israeli military actions during the massacre at Nasser Hospital, one of the last functioning hospitals in Khan Younis. A second shot killed those who had come to help, bringing the death toll to twenty, including five journalists inside the hospital. All of this was recorded by a camera. This is an action known in military circles as a 'double strike'. First, the target is hit; then, shortly afterwards, it is hit again to kill more people. The Israeli army is using this tactic in the Strip to ensure that victims do not survive. It is a form of military conduct that is illegal under international law, yet it is still used by both the United States and Russia. According to an initial IDF investigation leaked late yesterday afternoon, among the twenty victims, in addition to the five journalists, there were also Hamas terrorists. However, Chief of Staff General Eyal Zamir has not issued a statement.

Meanwhile, there was another massacre yesterday morning. An entire family was killed. The raid took place in Mawasi al-Qarara, north of Khan Younis. Five people were killed: a father, a mother and three children. In Jabalia, in the north of the Strip, one person was killed and many others were seriously injured. At the time of writing, the Gaza Strip's Health Minister had announced via Telegram that more than 70 people had been killed and 370 injured in the last 24 hours. This includes 17 people who were murdered while waiting for humanitarian aid. According to the Gaza health authorities, since 7 October 2023 (the day of the Hamas massacre), the Israeli army has killed 62,819 Palestinians and injured another 158,629.

The situation in the Gaza Strip is becoming more dramatic by the day. There is no food nor medicine. People are dying every day from bombings, hunger, and lack of medical care. Nowhere is safe anymore. Hatred and despair are rife. Even the small Christian community is living from day to day, but is determined not to abandon the parish premises where it has been housed for over two years. There are also elderly people, disabled people, and children. In the face of such inhumanity, diplomacy remains silent. Only simple, sterile appeals that go unheard.

"I hope that the entire international community, especially the United States, will exert pressure to reach a compromise. Perfect peace does not exist, but we must

arrive at something acceptable,' declared Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The same cardinal, in a joint statement with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III, also referred to the Christian presence in Gaza, saying: 'The priests and nuns have decided to stay and continue to care for all those housed in church facilities.' After all, leaving the parish and trying to flee south would mean certain death. 'There can be no future,' the two patriarchs added, 'based on imprisonment, displacement or revenge. There is no justification for the deliberate and forced mass removal of civilians.' They conclude: 'We do not know exactly what will happen on the ground, not only for our community, but for the entire population. We echo what Pope Leo XIV said a few days ago: 'All peoples, even the smallest and weakest, must be respected by the powerful in their identity and rights, particularly the right to live in their own lands, and no one can force them into exile.'

Meanwhile, protests against the Netanyahu government and in support of the release of hostages still held in the Strip are growing throughout Israel. The demonstration in Tel Aviv began at 06:29 yesterday morning, the time at which Hamas terrorists launched a fierce attack on Israel. Throughout the day, the streets of many cities and the capital were flooded with thousands of demonstrators who wanted to participate in the large protest that ended in Hostage Square yesterday evening.

The climate in the West Bank is becoming increasingly heated. Yesterday morning, Israeli soldiers entered Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian National Authority, targeting the governorate offices and, in particular, the currency exchange office. They confiscated items from the office and arrested several employees. During the raid, the military also threw smoke grenades into shops where civilians had taken refuge. More than twenty people were injured as a result of the operation. A journalist's car was also destroyed. During these occupation trials, snipers were positioned on rooftops. According to some Palestinian sources, the army simultaneously stormed several buildings in Hebron and closed off the area around the city centre hospital.